OFS IN BRIEF

The 22nd quarterly report submitted by the Lead Inspector General for Operation Freedom’s Sentinel (OFS) summarizes the quarter’s key events and oversight of the two complementary U.S. missions in Afghanistan: counterterrorism operations and building the capacity of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).

Afghan Peace Negotiations Begin  pp. 2, 8, 10–13
- The Afghan government and the Taliban released thousands of prisoners in advance of negotiations.
- Former Chief Executive Abdullah led the peace process and Masoum Stanekzai led the Afghan Islamic Republic negotiating team.
- The Afghan and Taliban negotiating teams met on September 12 in Doha, Qatar, to begin the Afghan Peace Negotiations.
- The talks quickly stalled over procedural disputes such as which school of Islamic jurisprudence should undergird the talks.

Taliban Attacks on Afghan Forces Threaten Ongoing Afghan Peace Negotiations  pp. 4, 13–14
- There were more enemy-initiated attacks this quarter than last quarter and levels of violence stayed above seasonal norms.
- Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad warned that “distressingly high” levels of violence could threaten the peace agreement.
- The Taliban focused its attacks on Afghan forces and Afghan government officials.

COVID-19 Disrupts Coalition Initiatives  pp. 4–5, 23–24, 26–27
- The NATO-led coalition conducted only limited face-to-face train, advise, and assist efforts to prevent COVID-19’s spread.
- U.S. contractors were unable to observe Afghan mechanics, making data used to track contract performance unreliable.
- USAID suspended some activities to protect implementers, partly due to a lack of available personal protective equipment.

Afghan Local Police Prepares to Disband  pp. 20–21
- U.S. support for the Afghan Local Police ended on September 30, 2020.
- The dissolution has the risk that unemployed former members will join the Taliban or militias.
- Former members may transfer to other security forces, but about 7,500 are not expected to meet vetting requirements.

U.S. Drawdown Continues, Depends on Taliban Upholding Its Commitments  pp. 3–4, 13–14, 36
- The United States continued to reduce its troop levels in Afghanistan, from 8,600 in July to less than 5,000 troops in November.
- The U.S. military closed five bases in Afghanistan, fulfilling a commitment from the U.S.-Taliban agreement.
- The United States will complete its withdrawal if the Taliban meets its commitments.
- The DoD said the Taliban fired rockets at a coalition base; the Taliban denied responsibility.
- There were no insider attacks against coalition personnel and no U.S. combat-related deaths this quarter.

Afghanistan Struggles with Pandemic Response  pp. 5, 29–32
- There were more than 39,000 active COVID-19 cases in Afghanistan on October 1, and nearly one-third of the population had been infected.
- COVID-19 testing never exceeded 1,200 tests per day, despite USAID funding 2,000 tests per day.
- USAID delivered 100 ventilators, but none had been distributed to hospitals after 2 months.

Oversight  pp. 42–67
- Lead IG agencies completed 7 reports related to OFS, including an audit that found the military services did not safeguard pharmaceuticals at facilities supporting OFS and an audit that found the DoS spent $8.4 million for meals neither needed nor provided at U.S. Government dining facilities in Kabul.
- Lead IG and partner agencies coordinated on 64 open investigations involving fraud, corruption, theft, human trafficking, and other crimes.